

# **RELIGION - ITS UNIVERSALITY**

## **Swami Ramdas**



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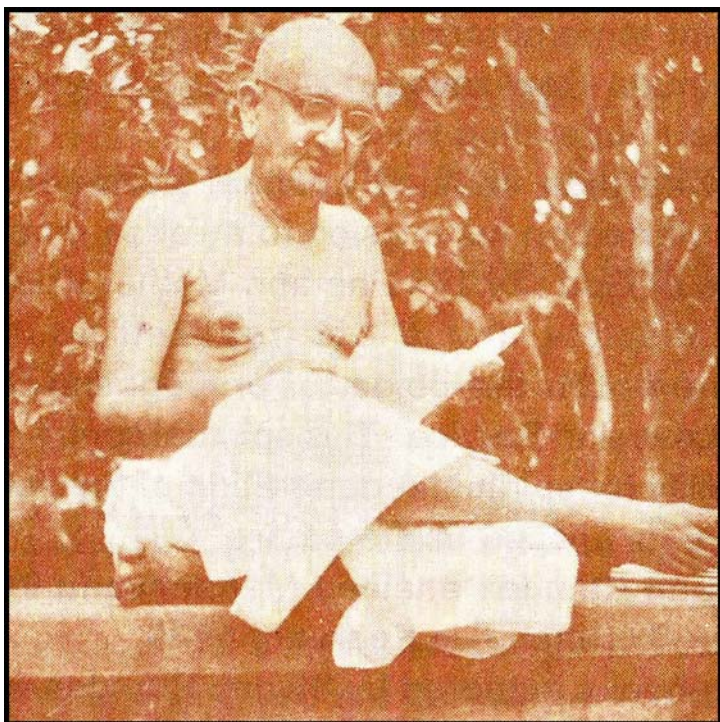
### ❧ PUBLISHER'S NOTE ❧

The term 'RELIGION' stands for unity of mankind whereas it has now come to be identified as a forum for compartmentalisation of different sects/groups under its banner. The on-rush of dissension, mutual wrangling and suspicion among the various sects and groups is on the increase and therefore, it is the need of the hour to know and understand the real meaning and significance of this oft used, and misused term – Religion. In this context, we feel that the writings on this most vital subject by our Beloved Gurudev, Swami Ramdas, will help in understanding the universality of the term which, when properly translated into daily life, will yield harmony and healthy relationship between individuals as well as communities and nations.

To make it easy for the seekers/readers to read, assimilate and put into practice, and at the same time to reach out to a wider section of the society, we have pleasure in bringing out these writings in the form of a small booklet.

May these writings be instrumental in triggering off a movement in the hearts of lovers of humanity to disseminate the cardinal values of Universal love and kinship among all in the globe to combat the menacing religious animosity.

Anandashram.



### THE AUTHOR

Swami Ramdas, who was known as P Vittal Rao during his pre-Sannyas days, was leading an ordinary life till God's grace descended on him in or about the year 1920. Then he was made to think deeply on the futility of worldly pursuits and the necessity of pursuing the divine path and realising one's identity with the Supreme Being,

which alone can lead one to 'Peace-eternal.' He placed himself totally at the altar of God. At this time his father initiated him with the holy and all-powerful Name of God – RAM MANTRA. He took to ceaseless chanting of the holy Name. When the prompting came from within to renounce the worldly life, he took to a wandering mendicant's life. Fiery aspiration coupled with intense practice to attain the Highest, hastened his spiritual progress and, in a short time, he could behold his Beloved God everywhere, both within and without. He thus showed how absolute surrender to God, arising from His constant remembrance by chanting of His name could lead to ultimate Realization quickly and to getting established in unending Bliss.

Having thus attained spiritual liberation and God-vision, he started on his mission to awaken mankind to the awareness of God. In 1931 he and Mother Krishnabai, his foremost disciple and a Self-realized soul, founded Anandashram with the object of propagating the ideal of Universal Love and Service. This spiritual centre offers every kind of facility for spiritual regeneration of the soul so that it may realise its pristine divine nature.

Swami Ramdas attained Mahanirvana in July 1963 and Mother Krishnabai in February 1989.

The books authored by Swami Ramdas which come from the depth of Reality continue to inspire innumerable devotees both inside and outside India.

*"Surely life has a beautiful meaning and purpose when it is understood to be of universal nature and significance. The utmost grandeur of it is revealed when it breaks through every sense of division and diversity, and sheds all around soothing light of pure, spontaneous love – the rapture of an inexplicable joy and peace."*

– Swami Ramdas



*“To love all is the true bhakti of God and to serve all is the real worship of God.”*

*– Swami Ramdas*

## **1. WHAT IS RELIGION?**

Try to enter into the mysterious origin of your and the world-life. To know who you are in reality is the real quest. To arrive at this truth you have to, by a systematized process of thought and discipline, transcend all human limitations set by the body, mind and intellect, and then, embarking on the realm of the Spirit, realize your immortal, changeless and blissful nature. This constitutes religion.



## **2. WHAT RELIGION WE WANT**

Religion, whose function is to guide and inspire mankind towards a life of mutual understanding, help and friendliness, has strangely been the cause of racial hatred, destructive rivalries and false attitudes of superiority. We want a religion shorn of all its narrow particularisations and free from dogmatic beliefs, superstitious impositions and bigoted and sanctimonious ways. We want a religion which appeals to the inner spirit



of every man and woman - a religion which is universal in its outlook and embraces all alike within its fold. We want a religion which brings love and joy to our heart, and light and wisdom to our head. We want a religion that knits man to man, irrespective of any apparent distinctions, into a common human community on earth. We want a religion that teaches us to sacrifice our little joys for the service of the distressed humanity. We want a religion that would give us the sight to behold all the members of the human race as belonging to one world family. We want a religion that makes us realise that we are the immortal, all-pervading and ever-blissful Spirit, and that God, we and the universe are one in the absolute Reality. We want a religion that would make us offer our homage equally to all the Teachers and Incarnations of the different creeds and sects in the world.

Religion is, in its real sense, as vast as the very heavens which grant refuge to all alike; as accessible to all as the very air that fills all space; and as equal in granting its favours to everyone as the light of the sun. You cannot confine religion within the narrow walls of a creed or society. So to be the votary of true religion means to be utterly free from all cramping limitations and to come out in the open to grip the hand of a Hindu, a Christian, a

Muslim, a Parsi, a Buddhist, a Jain and a Jew with the same equal love and vision.

The keynote of a religious life is selfless service - a service born of pure love and compassion for all beings and creatures on this earth. It is only such divinely inspired men and women who can stand forth as the champions of peace and goodwill, because they are possessed with the exalted vision of life eternal. Every human being can raise himself to this spiritual splendour and peace. He has only to break through the shell of egotism and reveal himself as he is - snap the bonds of the flesh and enter into his immortal life of the Spirit. Thus liberated he speaks out:

Peace and joy being your inherent possession, why go out of yourself in pursuit of them? Being the light yourself, why do you grope in darkness longing for an outer changing ray? Why deny your own everlasting radiance? Know that you are the Soul of the very universe - the eternal light, peace and joy. Realise your light and illuminate all. Realise your peace and shower tranquillity on all. Say, 'I am the all-blissful Spirit' and shed your joy on all. Assert your Divine nature and liberate thousands and millions from the fetters of bondage. Be God and lead others to God.

Love all and hate none. Mere talk of peace will avail you nothing. Mere talk of God and religion will not take you far. Bring out all the latent powers of your being and reveal the full magnificence of your immortal Self. Be surcharged with peace and joy and scatter them wherever you are and wherever you go. Be a blazing flame of Truth, be a beauteous blossom of love and be a soothing balm of peace. By the power of your Spirit dispel the darkness of ignorance, dissolve the clouds of discord and war and bring goodwill, peace and harmony amongst the people of the globe. This is your mission in life.

Live not for passing fantasies of life. Bid for immortality by dedicating all the forces of it to the service of God in humanity. Away with petty ambitions. Away with a low and narrow vision of life. Arise in all the glory and majesty of your invincible Self. Be pure, selfless, patient and resigned, never allow the ego to raise its hood and drag you after it; but be full of power, grace and splendour of God, verily you are God.

This is what true religion should make of a human being - all else is vanity and vexation.



### **3. TRUE RELIGION**

Religion is a matter of experience. Merely by becoming a member of a church, creed or sect, a person cannot be entitled to this experience. By reading any amount of scriptures and sacred books he cannot be granted this experience. By the observance of rites, ceremonies or worship a man cannot come by this experience. Spiritual realisation is a question of individual effort and struggle. It is the purification of the heart and illumination of the intellect which alone can lift him from the human to the Divine plane.

The man of true religion, when he is on the path, is mainly concerned with his own internal struggle for liberation and peace. He offers a steady and sustained fight to the enemies within him that obstruct his passage into the realm of God. His one sole aim is to totally live in the Divine light and life. He conserves and concentrates all the powers of his understanding, heart and activities for the realisation of this supreme state. Before he attains the goal, he would naturally shrink from preaching to others the great truths of spiritual experience. One cannot infuse into another the spirit of Truth unless one has the fullest knowledge and experience of it.

True religion is a religion of love, founded upon a clear knowledge and perception of the unity of all life and its varied expressions. The realisation of one's immortality constitutes the spiritual goal. Love for all beings and creatures in the world is based upon this height of realisation. Here love works with such an infinite vision that it breaks down all barriers of caste, creed and colour. He beholds the eternal Beloved of his heart manifest in all beings and creatures. This love refuses to be circumscribed by any limitation; because it flows with such an irresistible force that it demolishes all boundaries.

If humanity aims at real unity and peace, every man and woman must practise this true religion and become conscious of the one true God who is the one parent of all beings and creatures in the world. To be united with God is therefore to realise unity with mankind. This is the only solution to the present-day world problem so created by the spirit of distrust, hate, dissension and war.

So let us scrape away and rub off all the accretions of superstitions, worn-out dogmas and customs, and unessential and ostentatious rituals and observances belonging to all religions, and stand together in the one essential light of God whose beneficent rays are pouring on us all alike.

#### **4. OBJECT OF RELIGION**

The object of religion is to raise human life and consciousness to Divine life and consciousness. It is in fact a God-possession by which every aspect of life is elevated and transformed into an absolute state of perfection. The purpose of all spiritual discipline such as prayer, worship and self-dedication is to attain to this exalted state. It must be at the very outset understood that the supreme Truth which we aspire to realise is dwelling within everyone of us. By a continuous recollection and meditation of this Truth we ought to provide favourable internal conditions so that this supreme Reality may purify the emotions of the heart and fill it with love, compassion and peace; that it may illumine the intellect with the vision of equality and a universal sense of oneness in the multitudinous revelations of nature, that it may be made to flow out spontaneously by the balance of a purified heart and inspired intellect as selfless action that tends towards the regeneration of humanity without any distinction of race, creed, colour or nationality.

The heart which is thrilling with Divine love should expand and envelope the entire creation with all beings and creatures in it. The intellect detached and merged in the super-conscious and static existence behind the

manifestation should stand as an eternal witness, calm, serene and filled with radiance, supporting the workings of universal love and service for which the heart and body are made the instruments.

God, who is at once the immanent and transcendent spirit, who is the one sole Reality, is not only the silent and attributeless Brahman but also a Truth revealed as eternal light, infinite love and endless peace and bliss. A prolonged contact with this all-comprehensive Truth should enable us to be surcharged with these Divine attributes and transform the stumbling and ignorant human nature into a very expression of Divine light, love and bliss. Merely an ostentatious display of religious observances will not do; what is needed in the first place is a tremendous sincerity to rise to the very height of the Godhead to attain which is the chief aim and ambition of every aspirant or seeker after Truth. God must be made to work in us transmuting our entire life to one of spiritual splendour and peace, so that we can feel that we are utterly Divine in every atom of our being. We must live, move and have our being totally in God. The halo of a Divine light should surround us, and the rays of pure and glorious love should radiate from us translating itself into action that relieves the distress, misery and discord that prevail in the life of humanity at large.

Religion is not a thing for mere show. Religion signifies a real linking of the individual soul with the cosmic and ultra-cosmic Reality, ultimately to know that the individual is the embodiment of a Universal Spirit whose nature is absolute existence, all-pervading consciousness and inexhaustible joy.

Human life is indeed essentially Divine and the endeavour of a spiritual aspirant is to realise the truth of this mystic formula. In order to reach this state he must concentrate all the faculties of his heart and mind and all the powers of his senses and body for breaking down the walls of ignorance that obstruct him from attaining the vision of his true, eternal and divine nature. Life has to be totally dedicated to this lofty purpose. Lukewarm devotion, an interrupted course of discipline and a broken stream of meditation cannot enable the struggling soul to capture and possess the Truth. God-realisation is not an easy-going path. A steadfast faith, unshakable determination and resolute endeavour can alone make him progress towards it and enable him to come face to face with God, within the least possible time. No sacrifice should be considered too great to attain this supreme goal. Therefore, it is truly said that heroes alone are fit to walk on this path - that men of undaunted spirit can alone enter



upon this adventure. Surely, man who has turned his back upon pursuits after the ephemeral and illusive objects of the world can stand erect facing the magnificent Light of lights - the eternal God - and run towards Him with a heart burning with a keen and insatiable hunger for Him whom he holds as his only Beloved, by reaching whom alone his hunger can be appeased.

God-realisation does therefore mean for the aspirant to behold the Divine within and without all existences and, as a result, to extend his love and goodwill towards all beings and creatures in the world, to offer up every iota of his physical and spiritual power for the service of humanity and thus live the life of God Himself manifest in flesh and blood. Religion is therefore the practice of the highest Truth which brings about the transformation of the human into the resplendent being of the Godhead.



## 5. THE AIM OF ALL RELIGIONS

The aim of all religions is to point out the path that leads to perfect freedom, peace and joy. This blessed state can be realised only by the eradication of the ego sense through surrender to God.

Divine life should flow through us, divine love should dwell in our hearts, and divine light should inspire all our

activities. Therefore our heart should be attuned to His Love, our intellect be illumined with His wisdom and our body be worked at His will. This is the goal of human life.

To teach this great Truth came Krishna, Buddha, Christ and Mohammad. They declare in one voice that we can reveal the hidden Divinity in us by resigning ourselves to Him totally and dedicating our life to His service.

Mere intellectual understanding of religious truths is different from actual spiritual experience which is a matter of intimate relationship between the soul and God. It must be understood that to love and serve God is to love and serve all beings and creatures. To realise God is to be conscious of His presence everywhere. Wherever you turn, there is His light, power and glory.

Spiritual discipline which a man performs under the inspiration of the Divine can alone purify him and make him aware of the immortal Spirit which is God. All else is, as the saying goes, 'sheer vanity and vexation'.

Let us live and act as He wills for the universal good. Verily, to love and serve all constitute true enlightenment, liberation and peace – this is the loftiest achievement.



## 6. UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Divine consciousness is the most precious heritage of the human race. Ever since the ancient sages of the world first attained to it, may be many thousands of years ago in the present cycle of world existence, we have been witnessing an increasing galaxy of saints or men of Divine wisdom shining in the firmament of time. Each new age and decade has added to these spiritual luminaries. Incarnations, Prophets and Teachers have appeared from time to time in different parts of the globe, surely greater in number in the East than in the West, with the sole mission of awakening mankind to the consciousness of the immortal Reality of God.

It is indeed a delightful task even to flash a thought across the long vista of human history for a vision of man's highest spiritual achievements. The glorious work accomplished by the great men and women, who were inspired with lofty ideals and divine experiences, stands out bold and clear. Their colossal personalities, towering high above all things, still serve as beacon lights to many a ship-wrecked soul who is caught in the whirlpools of life.

The dawn of an exalted consciousness was first revealed to mankind in the Upanishads. In them the illumined Rishis of India have sung in ecstatic fervour of

the sublimity of an eternal and all-inclusive Reality. The fascinating strain of these songs of immortality was handed down to the succeeding generations by the earnest aspirants who drank in their Divine symphony. Then came Krishna, Buddha, Shankaracharya and Mahavira to spread the splendour of this Divine love to all the people of the world. Similarly, Socrates and Plato in Greece, Marcus Aurelius in Rome, Moses in Israel, Christ in Palestine, Mohammed in Arabia, Zoroaster in Persia, Confucius and Lao Tzu in China, appeared as the most outstanding figures for the spiritual regeneration of the race of their time. Then followed an era of widespread spiritual illumination that flooded almost every part of the world.

Principal among the great souls, who brought down the light and peace of God to the heart of man, are: Guru Nanak and Rama Tirtha of the Punjab; Tulsidas, Kabir and Mira Bai of the United Provinces; Chaitanya, Ramprasad, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda of Bengal; Jnaneshwar, Ekanath, Tukaram and Namdev of Maharashtra; Ramanuja and Madhwa of South India. In other countries, Spinoza of Spain, Mirza Ali Mohammed, Baha'u'llah and Abdul Baha of Persia; Tolstoy and Blavatsky of Russia; Carlyle, Ruskin, Wordsworth and

Edward Carpenter of England; Schopenhauer, Heine and Goethe of Germany; Washington, Emerson, James Allen and Walt Whitman of America. Now coming to our own times, mention may be made of a few spiritual heroes who have achieved world-wide renown. In India: Gandhi, Ramana, Aurobindo, Rabindranath, Krishnamurthi and Vaswani. In Britain: Hamblin. In France: Romain Rolland and Paul Richard. In Russia: Nicholas Roerich. In America: Sunderland, Mirza Ahmad and Kettner. It is incontestable that a great many more names may be included in the rosary of Divine personalities enumerated above.

However incomplete this brief survey is, it serves our purpose to show that, from time immemorial, a sustained light of Divine revelation, throughout the history of mankind, has not only been wonderfully maintained but it has also produced an ever-increasing number of God-men.

In spite of the intermittent wars, which spelt the destruction of human life on a vast scale, and erratic outbursts of hate, resulting in acts of wanton spilling of human blood, incited by narrow patriotism and insane fanaticism, the influence shed on mankind by the spiritual heroes of the world has had its supreme value and triumph. They held, one and all, that there is real and everlasting glory in self-suffering and even death, when

life stands dedicated at the altar of God and humanity. Millions have derived incalculable solace and peace from the spiritual influence which these great souls exerted on them, through their healing touch and elevating teachings. Even from a superficial study of the essential nature of the messages they delivered to the world, one cannot fail to perceive that they preached, in one voice, as it were, that the supreme goal of human life and all life is to attain to that Cosmic consciousness, by which the entire world and all its creatures are realised as united and one in a universal and super-universal, eternal Godhead; that the real essence of life in all creatures is Divine and the sum total of the manifested worlds and its beings is one undivided, all-pervading and deathless Spirit whose attributes are absolute peace and bliss.

Therefore, let everyone of us arise and understand the immortal nature of our existence and thus, giving up hate, ill will and pride, mingle freely with all people in the world in terms of perfect friendliness, brotherliness and divine fellowship. Let us realize that universal religion is the true religion – vision of divinity in all beings is the true vision - freedom and peace of immortality are the true freedom and peace.



## 7. RELIGIOUS UNITY

There are many religions, many creeds and many sects in the world. The object of them all is, ostensibly, to awaken in the heart of man a consciousness of a spiritual kinship – a knowledge of the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood or Motherhood of God. But what is the actual situation? Instead of standing for unity, love and brotherhood, they are busy fomenting ill will and dissension in the relations between man and man, and curiously enough, this is all done in the name of God.

The great Teachers, who brought the light of God to the hearts of men, belonged to no religion, no society, no church and no temple. Their temple was the entire world and their God dwelt in the hearts of all beings and creatures. So their love poured out for all alike irrespective of any man-made creed or class. Their love was as free as the air, their vision was as universal as the sunlight and their service was alike to all members of the human race.

There is struggle, strife and war going on in the world for attaining earthly power and glory. Men who are pursuing these aims are naturally impelled by the lower nature or self. But what to say of those who create trouble, violence

and misery in the name of God who is all love, mercy and peace?

Then again, just as superiority complex is rampant among those who are proud of their race, wealth, status and caste, so also it is evident among the followers of the great Teachers of the world. They say: "My Teacher alone is perfect and you can attain salvation only if you follow him; my religion is the true religion and all other religions are false; I am the only civilised man and you are all heathens and infidels." So long as this kind of mentality persists with the so-called religionists, instead of bringing about unity, harmony and peace in the world, they spread in it only discord and chaos.

The very conception of God is founded upon the principle of universal harmony and peace. He is the true servant of God and humanity who understands this truth and, realising the unifying power of divine love, looks upon all his fellow-men as members of one family of God. It is now that he beholds Divinity in all of them. It is now that his heart is flooded with pure love and his vision is radiant with light divine and his life is a consecrated offering to the indwelling God. A spiritual awakening of this nature is the need of the hour. Man should purify his heart and fill it with Divine love and his life must flow in blissful



spontaneity in the service of the suffering humanity.

Denominations, labels, organisations and societies are of secondary importance. The Divine Spirit - call Him God, Truth or Reality - should possess our souls so that we can melt into His being and become His very embodiments. Christ, Buddha, Krishna or Mohammed are not for being held merely as great ideals to be worshipped from afar. We have to mould and transform our lives so that we may become like them – rise to their stature and know our real divine and immortal nature.

Inherently every soul is bathing in the light and joy of God. If we only attain to the awareness of this glory, we can bring peace and goodwill in the world, otherwise not. Mere preaching, without becoming a flaming example that touches, elevates and transmutes the hearts of men, can do little good.

Owing to wars the world is passing through a period of terrible agony. It behoves us all now to sink our petty differences and unitedly lift our hearts to the Divine Master of the worlds in a prayer for peace and goodwill on earth. It is not given to us to fully understand God and His ways. Let us not quarrel over the limited and imperfect conceptions we form of Him. We know that God is omnipotent, all-loving and all-merciful. Let us open our

hearts so that His power and grace may be revealed in us. Let us submit our will to His will so that He may work through us. Let our puny self disappear in the effulgence of His presence. Let us love all people in the world in His name. Let our hearts go out in compassion and sympathy towards all those who are in sorrow and suffering. Let us invoke His blessings upon them. May we become His true children inheriting the qualities of our divine parentage!



## **8. RELIGION – A POINTER TO THE ETERNAL SOURCE**

Religion is the bedrock on which a true regeneration of mankind can be raised. But this religion should bear all the marks of a universal conception, in strict accordance with the teachings of the great Masters from whose lips flowed the same wisdom and truth. Dogmatism, superstition and inconsistent traditions have today enveloped the pristine light of spiritual culture.

If we want to walk on the Divine path, we ought to regulate the conduct of our life in such a way that we might gradually maintain in our hearts a consciousness of the great Truth dwelling in us and pervading everywhere. Useless frittering away of our energy,

especially mental, must be avoided. The mind must be controlled. By a steady process of concentration on the great ideal alone, can we resist the attacks of worries and anxieties. Let us keep the goal of perfect peace dazzling in front of our mental vision. A deep introspection and a persevering attempt to enter into the higher and exalted consciousness of our being, will enable us to raise an invincible power within ourselves, so that we can wield the internal and external forces to our best advantage. Let us realise that we are the immortal and all-blissful Spirit, and not merely a body which is only an ephemeral mask assumed by the Spirit for its play. Let us dive deep within ourselves to know the secret and eternal Source of our existence. The way to success, peace and power lies in this direction.



## 9. CLASH OF CREEDS

The existence of numerous religions, cults and creeds in the world has given rise to a great deal of strife and confusion in it. Each faith or creed holds forth to humanity that its founder is the only true Divine Teacher, and that through him alone a soul can attain liberation or salvation. Again, each votary of his particular creed, with

a zeal bordering on fanaticism for his faith, decries and condemns the other creeds as false. If one could only be unbiased and open-minded, and then try to understand the lofty principles upon which the teachings of the great founders of all religions are based, one would clearly perceive that all these great Teachers have striven and are striving to lead humanity to the highest goal of life - God. The saying "There is none so blind as he who would not see" is eminently true with many who are busy in waging war with other faiths than their own. Their one endeavour is to raise the pedestal for their ideal on the unstable ground of uncharitable criticism levelled at the Teachers of other faiths. The outstanding spiritual heroes who brought light to the world are: Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Zoroaster and others.

Life is intended for attainment and not for fruitless bickerings and strife. Life is more important than creeds and cults. Life elevated, purified and divinised does alone count. This can be done only when life is lived in the spirit in which it was lived by the great Masters.

It must not be forgotten that the supreme purpose of life is to convert it into one of blissful, loving and spontaneous service. Theological discussions and unregulated and harmful controversies have been wasting

away the precious hours of many a noble life, which would otherwise have greatly contributed to the harmony and peace of the world. Indeed, service is the keynote of life, and the Masters were and are the very embodiments of service. Instead of frittering away their energies in fighting with other creeds, the sowers of discontent could utilise the same powers, in their chosen way, for their own spiritual evolution and for the service of ailing humanity.

As it is, there is enough hatred and ill-will in the world owing to various temporal reasons; added to this, there is also distrust and rivalry set up between different religions in the spiritual field. God who is the Lord of the universe stands for unity and peace. This Lord is the same for all the religions and people of the world. Now, what to say of those who seek to create dissension and disruption amongst people in the name of such a God? They are not only barring their own progress towards the great ideal but also retarding the evolution of others.

Man is naturally an egoistic animal. Depending upon his partial spiritual experience, he dares to question the utility of other faiths than the one which he follows. Truth can be comprehensively known only through the perfection of experience. This perfection is the converging point of all the different lines of faiths existing in the world, and

from this point all faiths are seen to culminate at the same end and goal. In the present state of religious differences, which are made worse by persistent efforts to augment them, a keen sense of understanding and a spirit of comradeship among the followers is the urgent need.

May the spirit of God awaken the hearts of men to the consciousness of unity and brotherhood, founded upon an attitude of equality towards all religions, and upon a common faith in the one supreme Master, who is the divine parent of the universe, taking that all the great teachers, sages and saints that the world has produced are alike His representatives on earth.



## **10. MESSAGE TO THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS**

Ramdas is in full accord with the aims and objects of the Parliament of Religions and wishes the organisers every success in their laudable endeavour.

Ramdas is a believer in the unity and harmony of faiths. Before the consciousness of religious unity can be established, mankind has to rise above the narrow sectarian bias of the existing religions in the world. Each religion is indeed great in its own way, founded as it is by

a divine personality. Fundamentally, the teachings of all the great Prophets of the world are the same. A Parliament of Religions provides the best platform to bring out and stress this basic unity by presenting the teachings of all the prophets and saints of the world in their pristine purity and glory. Every effort made to accentuate the differences that exist on the surface between the denominational religions has to be discouraged and eliminated before the consciousness of world-unity can be established.

Ramdas notes that one of the objects with which the Parliament of Religions is held, is to inculcate in the modern mind a truly universal outlook and promote the ideals of universal love, brotherhood and international fellow-feeling in order to bring about world-solidarity and peace. The disappearance of the war-mentality, which threatens human life and civilisation today, is solely dependent on the dawn of the consciousness of Divinity in man. It is only the knowledge of the Divine that will elevate man from the animal to the spiritual status. On the plane of the Spirit there ever rules peace and harmony. To infuse into our life the light of the Spirit and to adjust our conduct to our fellowmen accordingly, is what constitutes the real establishment of peace-consciousness in the world.

Wars break out in the world only because of the ignorance, pride and selfishness of people who prefer to remain in their own narrow cages, unwilling to take a leap into the immortalising sea of Divine Life. Love limited to one's country, loyalty confined to one's race, religion or community, attachment to one's family and identification with one's body are all alike the offspring of ignorance which confines us in a cage of a smaller or a bigger dimension. To fling one's life into the infinite expanse of the Divine is the work of heroes. Happily, today, Mother Earth may be proud of Her heroic sons and daughters of the East and the West, who boldly proclaim that the world is their home and all beings in it are their brethren.

Immortality is the birthright of all. Divine consciousness is the most precious heritage of mankind. Life at the source is universal, free from all limitations. The teachings of the ancient Rishis clearly show that ignorance of the one all-pervading Truth, whose nature is pure Bliss, is the root cause of fear, strife and misery. International conflicts, religious wrangles, social injustice, economic exploitation and political tyranny are all found, in the ultimate analysis, to spring from selfishness born of the failure to realise the unity and universality of the Spirit. When the darkness of ignorance is dispelled by



the light of knowledge, one cannot but exclaim in a state of exalted consciousness:

“The great Spirit that lives and moves in me is also animating and activating all beings and creatures of the universe. For me racial, national and sectarian distinctions have no significance. I belong to the world. I feel for all, I love all and I cheerfully sacrifice my time, energy and thought for the service of all. National boundaries do not exist in my universal life and consciousness. I am not a member of any particular church, creed, cult or religion. My God is as much the light, power and joy of my soul as He is of everyone in the world – be he a Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Jew or Gentile. Love is the light and glory of my soul, which is one with the soul of the universe.”

All World teachers unanimously declare: “O man, if you want peace for yourself and for others in the world, adjust your conduct in accordance with the law of love dictated by the Cosmic Spirit. Expand your vision so that it can embrace all fellow-beings and link them to yourself by love, sympathy and goodwill. Rise above all narrow creeds, sectarian cults, communal leanings and national ambitions. Merge your life into the infinity of God’s own existence.”

May the Almighty Spirit, the supreme Ruler of the universe, awaken in the heart of mankind the consciousness of world-unity and brotherhood, based on an attitude of equality towards the different religions, accepting all the prophets, saints and sages alike as His representatives on earth!



## **11. RELIGIOUS VALUES IN THE WORDS OF GREAT TEACHERS**

The differences of class, creed, race and nationality, which we behold in the world, are merely incidental; primarily, humanity is one. The aim of all religions is to make human beings realise this supreme unity of all life. Let us briefly try to understand what the Great Teachers of the world have said.

In Hinduism the ancient Rishis and the later incarnations and saints have insistently preached the sovereignty of the Spirit over matter, and that in the light of spiritual knowledge, all beings and creatures are essentially one. Acquisition of mutual love, tolerance and harmony is the keynote of their teachings, because they declare, by developing these qualities alone real happiness and freedom is attained by a human being.

Man depends upon wealth and glory - the so-called good things - for his joy. These are illusive. The joy you derive from them is like a flicker. Next second, the light is gone and you are enveloped by darkness. But Divine joy is pure and holy - not a tinge of grief in it - for it is dependent on itself. When you depend upon something else for your joy, and that something disappears, your joy also disappears. If you depend upon the Eternal for joy, it will be for ever. God exists by Himself. He is His own source. If you commune with Him you will have immortal joy.

It is not external circumstances that make us happy or unhappy but it is our internal state and our outward attitude to circumstances. In the Bhagavad Gita there is a Sloka which says:

“Alike in pleasure and pain, who dwells in the Self, to whom a clod of earth, stone and gold are alike, to whom the dear and the undear are alike, who is firm, the same in censure and praise – he is said to have crossed beyond the Gunas.”

This is the state which is held out as the highest in the Bhagavad Gita. You have to transcend the pairs of opposites. Otherwise you are like a scared animal at the sacrificial altar. You are afraid at every moment that

something bad is in store for you. But you are in a state of equipoise, if you are one with God. Do not strive to get things from outside. Then you will be satisfied with what God gives you. Contentment is a perpetual feast. It can come to you only when you have got the self-existent bliss. It is there already in your heart. You have to be conscious of it. This happens only by His grace. God's radiance and beauty manifest in you by your chanting His name. By constant remembrance of Him you can purify yourselves and be fit for His vision.

In Christianity we find that Jesus Christ - the Prince of Peace - taught that the intimate fellowship of men, as children of the same God, can alone free human hearts from sin and sorrow, and grant them true freedom and peace. His last words to his disciples - "Love one another" - are significant.

The Prophet of Arabia, Mohammed, came to establish a brotherhood on earth. He held, to unite in the name of God meant real strength and happiness. His exhortation was to submit to the will of God and live in peace.

Buddha - the embodiment of compassion - preached on the triumph of love over hatred and showed how, renouncing selfish desires of the heart, a man can conquer

the ego and attain emancipation. He laid down that kindness to all creatures is the outward expression of such an illumined life.

Zoroaster delivered a message of love and goodwill. He laid stress upon the absolute purity of life as a necessary condition for attaining divine light and peace. He too taught that mutual help, sympathy and friendliness can alone bring salvation to the soul.

Guru Nanak invoked a tremendous spiritual power for uniting a vast number of people into one common fold. He fired them with true devotion and allegiance to God, brushing aside all non-essential observances that created division and dissension.

Then again, we have many other religious Teachers who came from time to time in different parts of the world to deliver the message of the unity of mankind, as an ideal to be realised by all God-lovers. Thus it is clear that humanity as a whole is one family and God is the supreme parent whose grace shines upon all alike.

The goal of all religions is the same - liberation of the soul from the bondage of the lower nature and the attainment of union with God. We know this achievement is entirely dependent upon an individual's friendly attitude

towards his fellowmen. Still, it is deplorable that there are acute rivalries and dissensions among the followers of these religions. They fight with each other and spill blood in the name of religion. While God should stand for unity and harmony, in His name the violent and brutal instincts of man are let loose to cause ill will, discord and strife in the world. Man, in his ignorance, wages war for earthly power and glory. When he discovers his relationship with God, he becomes a man of peace and loves all alike. Saying we are children and servants of God, how can we still harbour hatred for our fellowmen and fight with them, and that too as votaries of our faith? No Prophet or Teacher preached this way to his followers.

To realize world-unity, it is essential that we should enter into the realm of the Spirit where the surface distinctions do not exist, where all beings are equal in the eyes of God. The path is to elevate our heart towards Him, to get our mind filled with His remembrance, to commune with Him with our heart and soul and ultimately to surrender ourselves to His will in all aspects. It is now that our vision is illumined with an all-embracing love and we behold our fellow-beings as our dear kith and kin. It is now that we break through the veil of diversity and realise our common and universal bond of affection and love,

knowing that all strife, fight and warfare is born of sheer folly - outcome of a most selfish outlook upon life - cause of wanton pain and suffering to ourselves and to others.

Life is a noble gift of God. If it is not imbued with the spirit of divine love, light and peace, it assumes the wild nature of the denizen of the jungle. The warring instincts belong to the brute creation. Man is endowed with powers to develop divine qualities. If he only hearkens to the words of the Great Masters and attunes his life with God, what a heaven he can make upon earth!

O friends, to whatever religion we may belong, let us raise our heart constantly to the throne of God within us and by holding sweet communion with Him through prayer, Bhajan or meditation, reveal our inherent virtues of peace and harmony. By this we will not only enlighten and beautify our life but also make the world put on a serene and smiling face. As it is, the devastating tide of the present war is travelling in rapid strides with the object of enveloping the entire globe, and converting our fair earth into a vast slaughterhouse. The Spiritual power is far more potent than physical power. The power of Love is greater than the power of hate. This is the experience of all men and women of God.

Let us then all unite in the supremacy of the

omnipotent God and bring down His power and grace to cool the fires of destruction that are now raging in the world. Let us, by giving up our differences, live with each other as brethren and sisters, and show to the world the way of true happiness. Let us pray to God for strength, purity and peace. Let us pray to Him for harmony and goodwill on earth. Let us pray to Him for the speedy termination of this cruel war. Let us pray to Him for the triumph of love, trust and righteousness. Let us pray to Him to awaken us to our relationship with Him and our kinship with mankind. Let us pray to Him to grant us light and wisdom so that we can see Him in the faces of all beings and creatures.



## **12. THE UNIVERSALITY OF HINDU RELIGION**

The Hindu religion is a universal religion. It accepts all the great Teachers and spiritual Masters of the world as equally great, because they are all representations or manifestations of the Divine. The Hindus offer equal reverence to Jesus, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Buddha, Krishna or Rama. These are the great Teachers of the world. Hinduism is not an exclusive religion as many other religions are, which claim that people can attain salvation



only if they follow their particular Master. But this is not the claim of Hinduism. It says: "All religions are true. You may follow any religion you like but be sincere and look upon the Master, the supreme personality of your religion, as the very expression of Divinity, even as the Masters of other religions are. By having complete faith in your Master you will be saved, whether it be Buddha, Krishna, Jesus or Mohammed." This is the thing you find peculiar in Hinduism.

The ideal of Universal Love and Service means that, although we belong to different nationalities and countries, we are essentially one in Spirit. East, West, South and North have no significance in the realm of the Spirit.



### **13. TRUE PERCEPTION OF RELIGION**

Religious differences form one of the main causes that have created disunion and discord in the life of humanity. Men of true insight and vision are active and have, to an appreciable extent, succeeded in pulling down the walls that religions had set up, dividing one community from another, one race from another and one set of people from another. Still, attempts are being made to fortify these walls of separation by even men of great understanding

and influence, out of sheer cussedness or pride. But this is not all. To add to the confusion of religions, some societies are started with the object of converting the followers of other sects and creeds in order to swell the numbers of their own.

It must be understood that the truth of a religious belief does not depend upon the number of followers it could boast of. Mere change of religion does not signify a change of heart. Mere external transformation in the mode and habiliments of life does not mean a passport to the heavenly worlds. What is required is an intense longing and hunger of the heart to probe into the mysteries of life and thereby realize the inherent glory and immortality of the human soul. Spirituality is not a thing to be made fuss about. It is a relation between soul and God. The soul's love for its Maker must be so great that it eventually finds its freedom and joy in a super-conscious existence wherein it realizes its oneness with the supreme Deity.

When the people are fighting for the supremacy of creeds and religions, God, the Divine Principle who is the basis of life and manifestation, would seem to laugh at the abortive efforts of narrow-minded persons who go with the idea that by conversion to their faith alone a soul attains salvation.

India is a veritable home of religions and so India has become the battlefield on which a stiff fight amongst religions is fought. Conversion from one religion to another, brought about by questionable means, has been rife for a long time. This state of things has created a tense atmosphere which breeds ill will and hatred between the different sections of the people. If India, or the world in general, should be really united and happy, this restless and pernicious activity must cease. Let every religionist, instead of creating rivalries, fix his gaze upon the great saviour of his faith, and understanding the universal import of his teachings, shed his invidious animosities, and cultivate love and goodwill towards the followers of other faiths. There is already the dawn of an age when religious, political and economic unity and harmony will rule the world. Let wisdom, love and the spirit of service hasten the inauguration and fulfil the purpose of such an age. Let man widen his vision and behold the entire mankind as one unit born of and sustained by one supreme Master and Controller. Peace and harmony are here. Love and its consummation are here. The world unity and happiness of the entire humanity are here.



## **14. GOD IS LOVE**

God is defined as Love. What does this word Love here signify? What is its real nature? Love is absolute and is perfectly impersonal; it is the pure and dazzling power of the Spirit that dwells in and pervades all beings and things. Love is infinite and eternal. Love is beyond the implications of name and form - still it works through them. Love is beyond the sense of duality - still it reveals in multifarious ways. It is the omnipotent power that guides and controls all things.

Love is unaffected by the touch of time and place. The so-called right and wrong are unknown in the realm of Love. It is not coloured by the conflict of opposites and the modes of nature. Its light is as of a crystal. Love is spontaneous in expression and therefore supremely blissful. Its manifestation is based upon its indivisible unity and oneness with all that exists. Love is the one truth and one power. Love is ever taintless, ever flowing and ever acting from a transcendent plane. The upward movement and the downward both belong to Love. All opposites neutralise in the undifferentiated spirit of Love. Love is the mystic solvent of all diversity.

To realise God who is Love, you are asked to love

one another; to look upon others in the same light as yourself; to feel for others as you do for yourself. Can you understand the secret of this Love if you only strive to attain it through physical or mental perfection without seeking for a greater ideal? No, this is not possible. On no lower plane can you love another as yourself. You have to transcend individuality; you have to rise higher than the body and mind and realise the universal and immutable essence of your being, and then alone can you love another as yourself - not otherwise. You must attain to that consciousness in which you experience the ecstasy of oneness with all beings and creatures in the world. You must feel at the core of your heart that you, another and all are forms of one underlying Spirit. Diversity is merely on the surface. In the splendour of Truth, you and all are one.

In the vision of oneness and sameness of the life-principle there can be no dualism and the consequent clash of opposites. This vision is of Love - a pure emanation of an almighty and impersonal Spirit. Love's nature is therefore equality and harmony founded on the knowledge of oneness of all beings.

Compassion is the first quality to be developed in order to attain the bliss of impersonal Love. At the sight of

suffering your heart is touched and it melts. In a mysterious way you now feel the suffering of another as your own. This feeling is not of the body or mere mind. It is the outcome of a consciousness of something that equally dwells within you and the sufferer, and which is undivided. By a strange impulse you are urged to succour him. Your act of relief, whatever shape it takes, yields you inexplicable peace and joy. Verily, the peace that you thus derive has sprung from nowhere but the outer fulfilment of your intuitive or mystic realisation of inner identity with the sufferer. When impelled on by Love, you invariably take your stand on the impersonal truth of your existence.

So long as you are only seeking for perfection of Love in the relative good conceived by you as an ideal, you will be caught in the labyrinth of a never-ending quest. Understand at once that the root of Love is in your impersonal Self and to realise it, awakening the heart to the feeling of compassion and the resultant selfless action is essential. Perform all of life's activities in such a manner that you can every moment be conscious of your identity with the whole creation. Do not rely on any standard, however exalted, which is merely dogmatic, ethical or mental. Soar beyond all conditioned states of thought and life, and, reaching the infinite Reality, make this great

Impersonal as the one immortal standard of your entire life. This Truth or God has become all - there is none besides He.



## 15. RANDOM THOUGHTS ON RELIGION

Religion means to bind back. We have separated ourselves from God and we have to bind ourselves back to Him. This is what is meant by religion. Let us therefore unite ourselves in the name of God, serve one another and live in harmony and peace.

In a house, when there is unity among all members, there is happiness. When they are divided and quarreling, there is misery. God is the unifying force. Let us seek and find Him.



Religion should enter into every department of our life. It is the cry now-a-days that our life should be moulded purely, on a secular basis. This means that we should build up life ignoring the soul. But man is not merely what he appears to be, a bundle of flesh, bones, blood and skin, nor a creature living and acting solely under the impulses and thoughts rising from the mind. We have to recognize that beyond the exterior dynamics of the body

and mind, there is within man the Spirit which is immortal. It is by the power of the Spirit that our life is activated in its manifold expressions. In the classroom, hospital, office, market place, factory and field as well as in temple, church and mosque we should tune ourselves with this Spirit. Divine thoughts and feelings should permeate us.



Religious controversies are sifting matters by a process of elimination. All the dross is thus brought to the surface allowing the essence of truth to settle down to the bottom in its pristine purity. By standing apart from the clutches of this wrangle, one could clearly perceive that, in essentials, all religious Teachers agree and put before the world the same highest principle or truth of existence - God.

Two sticks when rubbed against each other produce the fire and the resulting fire burns them up, and the ashes of both mingle together into an indistinguishable mass. So also the narrow religious ideals, now in mutual clash and conflict, stand as they do merely upon non-essentials and distorted interpretations, will by mutual friction nullify each other, thus revealing to the heart of man the one light of the absolute Reality which can be reached only when the struggling human soul transcends



its own self-imposed limitations of creeds and religions.



Now, religions have become so many walls that segregate or separate us from one another. If any religion becomes the cause for accentuating our differences and creating barriers amongst ourselves, it does not serve the purpose. The purpose of religion is to eliminate the ego-sense, so that we can love the whole of humanity as we love our own family.

Religion is not a subject for discussion, much less for speculation. Religion means reunion of the soul with God. It signifies the intimate relationship between the two. The relationship develops into an uninterrupted communion with Him. Such communion and the resultant purity and peace can be had by anybody and at any place.

God wants us to be pure in heart. It is only then we can see Him and realise Him. He does not mind whether we go to this church or that, this temple or that, whether we belong to any particular creed, society or organization. What He wants is a heart longing for Him alone. So it is an individual concern. God is open to all. He is like the free air which all can breathe. His presence can be felt everywhere, whether it be in church, temple, market place, office, caves or jungles.

People of all religions and sects in India can join in their own way, in this great and urgent task of conquering the dehumanising spirit of hate and greed rampant in the atmosphere of the present day and of disseminating the soothing grace of Divine love and kindness. Let a day in the week be appointed on which congregational or individual prayers are offered to the Almighty in every temple, mosque, church, ashram, math and home. In this universal prayer, let Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jains and others freely participate. God of all religions is one – the same Merciful Master of the worlds. Appeal made to Him with a heart longing for the uplift of mankind is bound to bring about a transformation in its outlook and illumine its mentality.

To know or attain God through Christ means to become Christ himself in his pure and glorious life - to possess his heart of infinite love for all mankind; to hold Krishna as the pure ideal is to become Krishna himself in his infinite vision, power, greatness and humility; to accept Mohammed as the prophet is to become Mohammed himself in his heart of peace, compassion and mercy; to look upon Buddha as the Master is to become Buddha himself in his enlightenment, in his pure and untainted love for all and in his absolute purity; so it is with all the

other spiritual personalities, held in adoration and worship by their respective followers. If religion is understood in this sense, religious strife that is rife in the world will disappear, and all the creeds, cults and races will stand together beneath the flag of one God of the world, and work up their common destiny along the lines of mutual love, service and cooperation, and thus bring peace, harmony and happiness in the world.

Essentially, humanity is one. Under the influence of nescience we create a sense of diversity and see distinctions and differences among the members of the human race. We possess a natural affinity to each other. Everyone of us possesses the same power of thought, feeling and action. We are blessed with speech, which is a splendid means by which we can communicate with each other. So, we should think, feel and act in a spirit of love and unity.

The life principle that activates all beings is the same. We all breathe the same air, walk on the same earth, and are equally entitled to the enjoyment of the amenities which nature provides. The earth yields its rich gift to all alike. The differences between man and man on the material plane are, in truth unnatural and improper. For, the component parts and composition of human

bodies and the qualities inherent in them are not diverse and conflicting. If we look with the pure vision that belongs to an enlightened mind, we do not see any clear-cut line of demarcation that isolates man from man, one set of people from another or one nation from another. We are indeed parts of a stupendous whole. We are units that form the world-community or family. So we can live and act as members of a world-brotherhood or federation.

True religion therefore signifies the linking of the individual soul with the Cosmic Soul. The soul does not belong to any caste, creed, race or nationality. Its nature is universal. Inherently it is pure, enlightened, free and blissful.



*“The true vision is eternal and universal, beyond the limits of all creeds, sects, dogmas, customs and religions.”*

*- Swami Ramdas*